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FRINGES OF THE WAR.



PICTURES
OF WAR-
TIME
EFFORT
1914-18

F. W. V. R. C.

The Friends War Victims Relief Committee,
91, Bishopsgate, London, E.C. 2.

FRINGES OF THE WAR.

THE war has been unique, not only in its intensity and the methods by which it has been carried on, but also by the energy and persistence of the efforts to diminish the suffering it has caused. A wonderful work of succour and relief has gone on all over the world, and the Friends War Victims Mission is proud to have had a share in it.

The seven practical virtues emphasised by the early Christian Church were:—

Feeding the hungry

Clothing the naked

Giving drink to the thirsty

Helping the sick

Sheltering the stranger

Visiting the prisoners

and finally

Preaching the Gospel.

It is striking to see how exactly these are the needs which in France, Holland, Russia, and Serbia, our workers have had to meet in the past four years. These practical things they have done, and everywhere by deeds rather than words have carried a message of fellowship, sympathy and love above the battle.

France first claimed our attention, and it is there our greatest work has been done. Over four hundred men and women are working there, often doing the simplest work in ministering to the need for food and clothes and shelter, and again using the latest machinery and science in building and agriculture and medical and hospital work.

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This is what happens to a French village when the storm of war passes over it. Where children played and mothers chatted at the door there are only heaps of bricks and dangerous walls, and this was the dreadful condition of things our workers found when they went to France to give what help they could to people whose homes had been so terribly destroyed. In this town of Sermaize the F.W.V.R.C. has built 150 houses.



The only shelter remaining in many destroyed homes is the cellar, and many people are so forlorn that they live and sleep there in the cold and damp, often with streams of water running in on rainy days, because it is the best shelter they have. Mme. Quenandon and her daughter, whose photograph was taken in the cellar, lived there for many months——



-----At the door of the cellar this low shelter was put up to keep the rain from driving in, and Mme. Quenaudon is standing at the door of her home. The Friends War Victims Mission built a new house for her.



The French Government gave the wood and our workers gave the labour for erecting houses. Here are three of them putting up a hut for someone who was living in a cellar. We make houses by machinery now—about ten a week—and four men can erect one in a day.



Some of the huts look strange in the midst of the ruins, but the two French-women sunning themselves in the shelter of their humble home are feeling a pride and contentment which only those who have been homeless can really understand.



Even when they have got new houses the French refugees often have no furniture or beds. Frenchwomen are very proud of their great fluffy beds, and sleeping on bare boards is a dreadful hardship for old bones, so they are delighted to have our beds. The lorry has been piled up at one of our stores to rush off to some village, where its arrival has been long awaited.



When the motor laden with beds does arrive at a village everybody takes an interest. The mounted soldiers are as pleased as the children, and the beds and pillows are put on to barrows and wheeled away by the people who have had long discussions with our workers as to what they needed most.



Then there is furniture. We all dislike hard chairs, but packing cases haven't even backs, and it is difficult to maintain one's good manners with nothing but a box for table, so the Friends Mission distributes simple chairs and tables and cupboards. These two Frenchwomen live near a railway station, so they brought their barrows to meet the train.



But in other cases the furniture must be taken by motor. The day is fixed in advance, so that everybody expects it, and the women (for most of the men are gone) bring barrows, often used for wheeling clothes to and from the washing places at the river, and sitting down on them in the main street, patiently wait for the joyous moment when the toot of the horn is heard.



New homes cannot be built for all and many illnesses befall those who continue to live in makeshift shelters. These babies, so carefully tended in their basket cots, each with a writing pad for noting its progress and its troubles, are safely in one of our baby homes instead of in the cold dank cellars where their mothers were found sheltering because their houses had been destroyed—



When they are a little older they will sleep in the beds shown in this picture (their cots can still be seen in the corner of the room) and then they will take their meals at the little table with their brothers and sisters who look so much like little dolls in the picture.



Most of these children have lived for months in cellars. It is a little exciting at first, but it soon becomes wearisome and takes the roses from their cheeks and the shine out of their eyes, so some night a F.W.V.R.C. Car slips into the town, and while the bombardment still goes on, the children are hurried into it and taken away to some place where lots of good food and fresh air make them well again.



Much of the land of France is poisoned or so broken up that it cannot be cultivated, but wherever it is possible F.W.V.R.C. workers help the people to till a corner of land. They borrowed this field near a village in which many refugees were living, and here the old men find occupation in growing potatoes and add to their food supply.



Nearly every French peasant rears fowls and rabbits for food. Many of these were killed when the refugees fled from their homes, so away from the firing line the F.W.V.R.C. has started farms where hundreds of chickens and rabbits and even bees are reared and then sold or given to the peasants to start their own stocks again.

THE BELGIANS IN HOLLAND.

HOLLAND is a neutral country, but modern war leaves no one unscathed. Holland is short of food, and yet by international law she has had to maintain thousands of Belgian soldiers and civilians who could only escape imprisonment by flying across the frontier, especially when Antwerp fell. They were put into great camps in the middle of the heather-covered dunes, there to await the day of peace, like healthy men and women shut up in sick rooms. Holland now has not much food to spare for them. Our workers lived there not merely to amuse them but to give them occupation and training, to help the girls and boys, and to try to prepare them for the great and difficult part all Belgians have to play in building up again their ravished country.



Huts like these may not seem the most desirable homes in the world, but they are eagerly sought for when the alternative is life in long wooden barracks divided up by thin wooden partitions into little stalls which will just hold one or two beds, and with a curtain in front constitute the only home and the only pretence of privacy for thousands of Belgians.



Life in a camp soon grows tiring even when you can hardly remember what life was like before. There are so few games or books or recreations; but Scouts and Guides can find ways of doing things together, so English men and women (members of the F.W.V.R.C.) gave them help and encouragement, and now they camp out at week ends and earn innumerable badges.



Here are some of the Belgians in one of the workrooms opened by the Friends Mission. They are showing some of the things they have made, which include games boards, inlaid boxes, leather work, trays, brushes, shoes, raffia cases, and mats. One of the men is pretending to pour himself a drink from the varnish bottle !



The women, of course, do sewing, and they have learnt to make their own clothes, and clothes for children who come from Belgium very poorly clad. They like to do appliqué or embroidery work in bright colours. Everything in the camp seems so dull and depressing that bright colours make people feel cheerful by contrast.



This bright corner does not look much like a refugee camp. All the things in it have been made by refugees, however—the cradles of wicker, the playing pen and the table, the toys, the pictures and the quilts, and they were very useful when the crèche was opened for babies to pass the time in while their mothers were at the workroom.



This is a Kindergarten, where young Belgian children play and have lessons, outside the F.W.V.R.C. hut, under the care of one of our workers while their mothers are busy in the workrooms making clothes for them or for poorly clad children who still come into Holland from Belgium.

REFUGEES IN RUSSIA.

THE Russian refugees have a terrible tale to tell, for their country was fighting disorganisation and treachery and famine within while it fought the invader on the front. Russia has never had hospitals, charitable societies, nor a splendid Red Cross service like ours. A nation of serfs does not soon learn to act together, to set up new organizations for new purposes, and to adapt themselves rapidly to new conditions. When the refugees poured into Russia, they were kept travelling for week after week, being moved from one place to another, till they found a temporary refuge in military barracks in Turkestan.

Prince Lvov secured the removal of the refugees from Turkestan, where they were dying every hour, and most of them were brought to Samara, a bleak, monotonous, level land, where the peasants were angry because they brought disease, and the refugees were miserable because the peasants had no food for them. This is the district where most of our work was done in Russia in giving medical treatment and food and employment until the famine of 1918 and the hope of returning home caused the refugees to leave. They are still wandering in Russia in their thousands, however, and some of our workers have stayed on all through the Revolution to help them in any way they can, most often by giving them food to keep them from starving.



This great mansion, Mogotovo House, has a strange story. A Russian who was a poor man made a great fortune, so he went to the city and found a beautiful wife, and in order to please her built this house out on the steppe in a style which had never been seen before in that district. She soon grew tired of it and they left its great rooms empty until the Friends Mission came there in 1916 and cleaned and warmed it and made it a home for nearly two hundred refugees, old folk and children, who had been crowded in out-houses and stables.



The peasants in Samara, the district beyond the River Volga, to which F.W.V.R.C. workers went, live in low huts, often as poor as this one in the picture. Their food is very monotonous and their clothes show how cold the weather is. The refugees, who were accustomed to good food and had no warm clothes and often could not speak the language of the people they lived with, suffered many hardships, and welcomed all the more the help and sympathy of our workers.



These are some of the refugees with a Russian cart piled up with their goods at the gate of Mogotovo House. It is now a spring day with bright sunshine, and after being cared for during the winter they are going to live on a neighbouring farm. They may be going to work at one of the workrooms our Mission opened. These were very popular because the women needed the wages and the clothing they made there and were so tired of having nothing to do.



We have heard strange things of the Revolution. A poor Russian woman said to one of our workers, "Every change I have known has been for the worse," but the people thought the Revolution was going to bring peace and happiness to everybody, and held meetings like this in the villages to agree to be ruled by the people's will instead of by the Czar and his officials, who they believed had betrayed them in the war.



The important features of every Russian village are the church and the market. This is a pottery "stall." In markets like these our workers often bought their food. From Mogotovo House they used to take a cart and buy great quantities of eggs and grain and often a whole sheep at a time.

THIS record of work abroad is paralleled by the efforts of those at home, who have now subscribed over a quarter of a million pounds to keep the work going. Boys and girls have done their part, not only in giving money, but by gifts for refugees of clothing and of seeds for their gardens, and by writing letters of good cheer to refugee girls and boys in France and Holland. More money is needed. We spend nearly £250 a day. Gifts should be sent to—

A. RUTH FRY, *Honorary Secretary*,

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